

in Queens will be operating at or over capacity. This is almost unbelievable.

But the average age of a school in New York City is 55 years of age. One out of every five schools in the City of New York is over 75 years of age. Now, when they built these schools back in the 1920s and 1930s, they were built to last; and that is why we have them today. But any school with any normal wear and tear would have to begin to show that wear and tear at least maybe 20 to 30 years after being built.

But our students are going to schools that were built 55 and 75 and some even 100 years ago in the City of New York. They are simply falling apart. These schools need new heating systems to replace unsafe older models. Structural repairs are needed, such as retaining walls, windows, and outside black top, and inside modernization repair such as lights and toilet fixtures.

Let me just add a little point here. That is in schools that maybe 55 to 75 years of age. Some schools will put on additions. Some schools have temporary classrooms, and that space is taking up the space where there once was a school yard where children would have the opportunity to play in recess or to gather before and after school.

The school where I attended kindergarten is PS 229 in Woodside, Queens. Woodside, Queens right now has no playground. Where I played hockey and basketball and grew up, that playground no longer exists. What has taken its place is modular classrooms and now a brand-new wing. It is only my hope that, when the brand-new wing is completed, that they will have a small portion of that playground to be restored to the children so they can use it for recreational purposes.

We need to assist local education agencies, those who know best, whether they need construction, modernization, or technical upgrades. So those who say that the Federal Government should not be in brick and mortars, fine. I think we ought to be involved in brick and mortars. But fine. Let us let the State and local governments handle that. We certainly could be there to help them with financing.

It is interest-free bonds, which will provide the flexibility and cost-effective approach to assist our crumbling schools. Mr. Speaker, I support the Public School Modernization Act of the gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL) and the School Construction Act of the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. ETHERIDGE). Both these acts will drive millions of dollars to New York State and to my congressional district.

The Public School Modernization Act will provide \$22 billion over 2 years in zero interest school modernization bonds. These bills would give 50 percent of the bonds to the 100 school districts with the largest number of low-income students and would give the remaining 50 percent directly to the States.

The Rangel bill would extend Davis-Bacon provisions, which would require payment of prevailing wage rates on all

Federal construction projects, to projects funded through school modernization bond tax credits. I would say this bill would bring over \$2.8 billion in funds to the State of New York and to the City of New York.

The School Construction bill of the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. ETHERIDGE) will provide \$7.2 billion nationally in school construction bonds to States suffering from rapid school-age population growth and provide the funds needed by States and cities experiencing high rates of growth in suburban and urban school districts. This will bring \$540 million in school construction assistance to the State of New York.

I have been talking about New York State, but obviously the numbers we are talking about here extend across this great land in other areas that are experiencing high growth, and other school districts of high levels of impoverished children would also receive a great share of the assistance provided through school modernization bonds.

Both of these bills will help reduce the heavy burden on our local property taxpayers by offering school districts tax-free bonds.

Let me just give my colleagues a couple of national facts. One-third of the Nation's schools were built before World War II and are still in operation. One-third were built before World War II. There is currently a \$112 billion backlog in school construction and modernization needs, \$112 billion. Sixty percent of our Nation's schools have at least one major building feature in need of extensive repair. Think about that, 60 percent of our schools in this Nation have at least one major building feature in need of extensive repair.

Fifty-eight percent of the Nation's schools have at least one unsatisfactory environmental condition such as poor ventilation or poor heating. In fact, in some schools in Queens County and in my district and in the City of New York, they are still burning coal, still burning coal. We are going into the 21st Century still burning coal. Amazing.

In my home district and in many of our schools, we are heading into the 21st Century, and we are facing an enormous lack of seats. If we do nothing, if we do not help our local government, Queens County will be facing between 20,000 and 60,000 seats that they will be shy by the year 2007, between 20,000 and 60,000 seats shy.

The City of New York and the State of New York are doing all they can to provide funds for school construction and modernization, making schools and classrooms ready for the 21st Century, providing computers, providing access to the Internet, providing cable-ready classrooms. They simply cannot keep up with the pace.

Ellis Island no longer exists in terms of welcoming new immigrants to this great country. What has taken its place is Queens County. My borough has seen a tremendous growth in the

past few years, and that is going to continue to take plates in the coming century. In fact, while most of the rest of the city and the other boroughs will be seeing a decline in student growth population, Queens County will be seeing a massive, massive growth. Much of that is due to the baby boom era. Due to the baby boom echo, school enrollment has now reached an all-time record high of 52.7 million in this Nation.

To meet rising school enrollments, 6,000 new schools will be needed to be built over the next 10 years in order to meet that challenge. I ask my colleagues, if this is not crisis, what is? If this issue does not ring with them, what will?

I urge Speaker HASTERT to bring school construction legislation such as the bills of the gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL) or the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. ETHERIDGE) to the floor for debate as soon as possible.

As we ready ourselves for the 21st Century, we have to ask ourselves, have we done all we can do to prepare our students for the next millennium. In fact, not the next millennium, the next century? In fact, have we done all we can do, not for the next century, but for the next decade? Are we really doing all we can do to help prepare our students just for the next decade?

Our schools can no longer wait for that answer. Mr. Speaker, we must act today.

ENCOURAGING FAIR AND OPEN DEBATE ON PATIENT PROTECTION LITIGATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SIMPSON). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. GANSKE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. GANSKE. Mr. Speaker, another week has gone by, and this House of Representatives has done nothing again to address the abuses in the HMO industry. I have been coming to the well of this House for 4 years to encourage the leadership of Congress to allow a fair and open debate on patient protection legislation.

Every time, I point out the HMO abuses, like the HMO abuse that cost this woman her life, or the HMO decision that cost this little boy both his hands and both his feet, like the HMO decisions that a child born with a birth defect like this, complete cleft lip and palate is a cosmetic defect, and they will not cover the cost of repair.

Every week I talk about patients like this, this woman who fell off a 40-foot cliff, and her HMO refused to pay for her hospitalization even though she had a broken skull, broken arm, broken pelvis, because she had not phoned ahead for prior authorization.

Mr. Speaker, these are not just isolated anecdotes. The victims of managed care are our friends, our neighbors, our fellow workers, our own family members. That is why audiences cheered when Helen Hunt described with blistering language her HMO's abominable treatment of her asthmatic son in the movie "As Good As It Gets."

□ 1930

Mr. Speaker, that is also why the polls show that 85 percent of the public think that Congress should do something to stop HMO abuses like the ones that I have just shared.

So, Mr. Speaker, what is happening on Capitol Hill? Well, for weeks the Committee on Commerce has had a draft of patient protection legislation that the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. COBURN), the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. NORWOOD) and I provided the chairman, and we still have no firm commitment on a date for subcommittee action, much less full committee action. There are rumors on Capitol Hill that because the majority of the committee probably would vote for a strong bill, the rumors are that our committee may not even get a chance to vote on the issue, just like a repeat of last year.

This week the Subcommittee on Employer-Employee Relations will begin voting on what can only charitably be called a series of protections for the HMOs, not for patients.

I urge my colleagues to look at the fine print of those many bills. Most of those "limited" bills that are going to be taken up in the Subcommittee on Employer-Employee Relations are taken from language of last year's bill which passed the House that was crafted in the middle of the night by the industry and that I would charitably describe as the HMO Protection Act of 1998.

So why is the Subcommittee of the Committee on Education and the Workforce not using a comprehensive bill as a markup vehicle? Why are they not using the bill offered by the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. NORWOOD)? After all, he is a Republican member of that committee. Why are they not using my bill, the Managed Care Reform Act of 1999, which has the endorsement of many consumer groups like the American Cancer Society and professional groups like the American Academy of Family Physicians and the American College of Surgeons?

Well, the answer is clear. Last year the House rules were used to limit debate on this important issue, and the HMO industry is pulling strings again. I only hope that enough of my fellow Republicans on the House Committee on Education and the Workforce will say enough is enough. Let us do this right. And if they do not, let us hope that their constituents will flood their offices with pleas that they sign the committee petition that would make a real, comprehensive reform bill the vehicle for the markup.

Most of us are in Congress to try to make a difference. We feel that public service is important. As a Republican, I do not want bigger government, but I do want better government. And there are many big problems confronting us like securing the future of Medicare and Social Security and providing for our Nation's defense, but there are many problems that are less nationally portentous, but equally grave for individuals that many of us as Republicans want to help solve.

I am proud that I have contributed to helping pass legislation in the past few years to help make food safer, to help make water cleaner, to provide more life-saving drugs. And I am proud to come from a Midwest Republican tradition of common-sense government. It was Midwest Republicans like Bob LaFollette who called for minimum safety and health standards that work. It was Republican populists who called for the prohibition of child labor and for 1 day's rest in 7 for all wage-earners.

Republicans took up the causes of the muckrakers and helped pass the first food safety laws. It was the Bull Moosers who called for a system of social insurance for those who were injured on the job. It was Midwest Republicans who encouraged rural education and agricultural extension.

An Iowan, Carrie Chapman Catt, a Mason City, Iowa, high school principal, organized the National Women's Suffrage Association in 1905. Now, I do not know if Carrie Chapman Catt was a Republican or Democrat, but I do know that Midwest Republicans called for suffrage of women in 1913.

Mr. Speaker, it was Republican Teddy Roosevelt that broke up the trusts and stood up for the little guy, stood up for farmers who had battled the railroad trusts and the railroad robber barons.

I call on my Republican colleagues to remember our compassionate conservative heritage. I call on my Republican colleagues to tell our leadership and committee chairmen that we are not in the pockets of the HMOs. Teddy Roosevelt knew that the little guy could not stand up alone to the railroad barons without help from the government. The little guy today cannot stand up to an HMO with the way the deck is stacked against him.

So what does the HMO industry now want? They want the Federal Government to spend \$60 billion a year for tax subsidies for their industry; but, of course, with no strings attached, nobody telling them how to run their business, nobody telling them to stop abusing patients. They do not want any State insurance oversight, and they do not want any Federal requirements either. "Just give us the money."

These are the same people, Mr. Speaker, who are spending millions of dollars lobbying here in Washington against the Patients' Bill of Rights. Last year, Mr. Speaker, the industry spent more than \$100,000 per Congress-

man lobbying against patient protection legislation.

It is time for my Republican colleagues to remember our Teddy Roosevelt and our Bob LaFollette tradition and back a bill that would give the little guy some say over his medical care.

In 1993, the HMO industry told us we would lose our choice in health care and we would not get the coverage we needed if the Clinton health plan passed and became law, and it was true. Unfortunately, those same insurance companies went ahead and did the same thing they opposed in the Clinton health plan in order to increase their profits.

However, just as many of us were against a government bureaucrat running roughshod over patients, we should be equally outraged over an insurance bureaucrat doing exactly the same. \$60 billion a year of taxpayer money without real patient protection reform like my Managed Care Reform Act of 1999 would be to reward the HMOs for their patient abuses.

Do not get me wrong. I strongly support increasing tax deductibility for health care, I just think that the health care companies should not get something for nothing. It would make Teddy Roosevelt and Bob LaFollette roll over in their graves.

Mr. Speaker, I say to my colleagues on both sides of the aisle: Join me, fight the big money HMO special interests. Let us show our constituents that we cannot be bought or intimidated by special interests any more than Teddy Roosevelt could be. Let us pass strong patient protection legislation for all Americans this summer.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SIMPSON). Pursuant to clause 12 of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

Accordingly (at 7 o'clock and 43 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

□ 2103

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mrs. MYRICK) at 9 o'clock and 3 minutes p.m.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 1000, AVIATION INVESTMENT AND REFORM ACT FOR 21ST CENTURY (AIR21)

Mr. DREIER, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 106-185) on the resolution (H. Res. 206) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 1000) to amend title 49, United States Code, to reauthorize programs of the Federal Aviation Administration, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.